THE LOST GOLD MINE OF THE HUDSON

NY PUBLIC LIBRARY THE BRANCH LIBRARIES
3 3333 08102 5211

res
REFERENCE
B 45833

C

Presented by

Justin Coffin

Nov. 28, 1923

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/lostgoldmineofhu00newy

"They threw pieces of the heavy ore with all their strength at the balls of fire." *See page 37.*

THE
LOST GOLD MINE
OF THE
HUDSON

BY

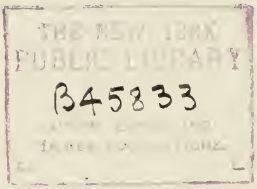
A SUMMER VISITOR

SECOND EDITION

The Knickerbocker Press
NEW YORK

Copyright, 1915
The Knickerbocker Press
New York

Reprinted, 1923



This Little

HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

WAS FIRST TOLD AS A TWILIGHT STORY

TO

FORREST AND CELONE

TO WHOM IT IS NOW DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

THEIR AFFECTIONATE FATHER

Tristram Coffin

The Lost Gold Mine of the Hudson

CHAPTER I

THE visitor to Mount Beacon or to other lofty heights on the northerly side of the Highlands of the Hudson, cannot fail to notice the three ranges of mountains which run nearly parallel with each other for a long distance west of the river. Viewed in connection with the majestic Hudson itself and the lovely intervening valleys which they overlook, these ranges render that region strikingly picturesque and beautiful. The one nearest the river and only a few miles from it, comprises a number of thickly wooded hills, varying in height from seven hundred to one thousand feet above the sea level.

Were it not for the towering Shawangunks beyond them and the lordly Catskills that soar above them both from still farther in the interior, this lesser range would have been given far more attention than it has received. It is doubtless owing to these facts that it has never borne a name more worthy of it, but has been known simply as "The River Hills."

For many miles they stand like sentinels guarding the long-settled region that lies between them and the Hudson. When seen from the valley and especially from the fruit-covered elevations with which it abounds, they constitute the finest and most important feature in a diversified and charming landscape. But they present their most attractive aspect when viewed from near either end of the range. Then their many rounding summits rising and falling in succession and apparently lessening in size as they sweep away, seem like the great backs of a train of colossal animals following one after the other. Pure

spring rivulets of cold water flow from their moist shades down through the cultivated fields at their base; winding roads and paths find their way through the depressions between their heights; the summer thundershowers almost invariably make their first appearance to the residents of that part of the river region, rolling grandly over their green tops and the setting sun is last seen as it sinks beyond them at the close of day.

Near the river front adjacent to these noble heights, nestles the quiet hamlet of Knotlimb. It is a modest place which hides its business centre from the eye of the day-boat tourist in a cosy vale behind the steep bank of the river. It will be useless to consult the guide-book map to find its name, for it is not even an incorporated village. Nevertheless it is an ancient settlement, older than most of the towns along the Hudson. Its recorded history runs back far beyond the Revolution into the hazy Colonial period. It is not entirely unmindful, however, of the signs of modern

progress, as shown in other sections of the valley. Visitors from the outside world are sometimes informed that its churches are free from debt, that its public library is large and well sustained, and that there are along the Hudson near at hand more desirable and convenient residence sites, commanding finer views, than can be found elsewhere. But the natural advantages of the locality and its bright prospects for the future appear to be secondary in the minds of its denizens to the cherished annals of its past. It continues to pride itself on its old families, its time-worn historic dwellings;[1] on the noted men and women whose native place it is, and still clings with almost affectionate regard to the traditions connected with its two centuries of existence.

[1] In old Knotlimb and on the hilly, pleasant roads that intersect the very attractive stretch of country that lies between the Hills and the river, there are many well-preserved habitations of early days. Some of them, dating back fully one hundred and fifty years, have been occupied by several generations of the same families.

The particulars of many interesting and well-authenticated events, as well as of some more or less doubtful tales, associated with the place, have been handed down from one generation to another, from a remote period. The one which perhaps is mentioned most frequently in the neighborhood gossip, relates to a gold mine which is supposed still to be hidden in one of the River Hills. A stranger sojourning for a time in or near the village, is quite likely to have his curiosity aroused by references to the subject. If he is sufficiently interested to make careful inquiries and consults the older and more affable among the native residents, he will probably ascertain all the alleged facts and traditions in regard to it that have survived the lapse of time. Such was the agreeable experience of the writer, and the information gained, including some reconcilable variations and necessary elaboration, are contained in the following narrative.

CHAPTER II

IMMEDIATELY after the close of the Revolutionary War, a stranger, a man past middle age, settled in the vicinity of Knotlimb. He lived alone in a small house upon a place of a few acres including a piece of woodland, on one of the roads that led in the direction of the River Hills. No one knew whence he came or any facts in regard to his previous life, except that he stated he was a native of New England and that he had served as a soldier throughout the long war. He cultivated a small garden and prepared a liberal quantity of firewood for his use during the cold season. He kept no animals, fowls, or pets. He seldom appeared in the village but obtained most of his needed supplies from the neighboring farmers, and always made

prompt payment therefor. He dressed in a simple but suitable manner, was civil to those who accosted him but discouraged all attempts at familiarity. Once a year in the mild season he was absent from his home for several consecutive days, sometimes for more than a week. He would go and return on one of the passenger sailing vessels that navigated the Hudson before the advent of steamboats. It became known that on these trips he went to New York, and sometimes to New England. He spent a day now and then in one of the large river towns nearest to Knotlimb. He gave his name as Truman Hurd but in the course of time in the little community he was generally called the "Old Hermit."

So far as known, during the seven years of his residence there, Hurd had but one visitor, an Indian about his own age who came to see him several times each year during the warm weather, and remained for a number of days on each visit. As there were many Indians at that time

living in the Atlantic States and especially in the Hudson River Valley, his visits caused no surprise, the only wonder being, not that he should have an Indian guest but that he should have no others.

Whenever the Indian came, it was observed that, except on the night of his arrival, and of that before his departure, no light shone from the windows of the hermit's house. On several occasions late travelers reported having seen him and his Indian friend going or coming on foot along the road leading to the mountains, each carrying a bag or bundle of considerable size. The conclusion was that the two men visited and remained in the River Hills several days and nights whenever the Indian was there. Conjecture became rife as to the cause of these nocturnal trips, and various reasons and explanations were suggested by those whose curiosity was aroused. The one that gained most credence was that the strange couple knew of a mine in the mountains, and that their

visits to it were made for the purpose of obtaining some kind of precious metal. The fact that Hurd always had ready money to pay for his needs without working or raising any crops, except garden vegetables for his own consumption, lent color to this view.

After a time, young men and boys began to stroll off to the mountains usually on the pretense of going hunting, and would search through the big wooded hills hoping to find the mine, but they always returned disappointed.

On one occasion two daring fellows secreted themselves after dark outside of Hurd's garden fence and stealthily followed the two men when they left for their usual trip. But their curiosity remained unsatisfied, for before the foot of the Hills was reached Hurd and the Indian, who had evidently suspected the presence of the spies behind them, suddenly turned about and walked rapidly toward them. Seen through the faint moonlight, the two men

appeared to their pursuers to assume gigantic proportions as they strode down the hill. The young men, in relating the incident, said that Hurd pointed a large pistol at them, and that the Indian flourished a tomahawk in the air in a menacing manner. The young fellows, thoroughly frightened, took to their heels and ran out of reach as fast as their legs would carry them. Doubtless their imagination pictured in part what their eyes did not see, but all the same no one ever ventured to follow the two men after that episode.

CHAPTER III

ONE day the village doctor received an urgent message from one of Hurd's neighbors that the old man was sick and wished to have the doctor visit him immediately. The doctor had attended him several times during the years of his sojourn there, and had become better acquainted with him than had any one else. In fact, the doctor was the only person, save the Indian, who was known to have entered the old hermit's dwelling. All that the doctor could reply to the questions frequently asked him as to his visits, was that Hurd had always treated him cordially and paid for his calls; that the furniture of the house was simple but comfortable, and that everything was clean and in good order.

On this occasion, however, the doctor found that the old hermit was dangerously ill and insisted upon his having proper nursing attendance, to which Hurd reluctantly consented. The doctor also advised him that, although he might recover, if he wished to make any arrangements as to his affairs he ought not to delay doing so. The reticent old man heard the serious words with entire composure, as though they were not unexpected, and after a few moment's silence, said that he had some property which he wished to have distributed after he was gone, and at his request the doctor wrote down the names and addresses of those who were to be remembered, and certain directions in regard to the matter. After providing for the payment of his funeral expenses and debts, Hurd dictated the following clause: "I wish my faithful Indian friend Uscung of Esopus, N. Y., to have the one-fourth part of my estate. All I possess has come to me through him, but in what manner

I have made a promise I would not reveal." As to his other beneficiaries, who included all his heirs, no amounts were mentioned but each one was given a certain percentage of the remainder of his property. The doctor suggested that the town justice of the peace, who often acted in the capacity of a lawyer in such cases, should be employed to put the directions in the form of a regular will. Hurd, however, would not agree to that and desired the doctor to do everything himself in regard to the disposal of the estate without having recourse to any proceedings in court, which the doctor finally promised to do.

When the paper was finished and signed, the old man who was in bed, pointed to a common nail which had apparently been driven most of its length in one of the wide painted base boards, and asked the doctor to press hard upon it. Upon doing so the doctor was surprised to see a section of the board turn out into the room on unseen hinges, disclosing a strong wooden box

locked and sealed, snugly hidden in a recess in the wall. Hurd then told the doctor that the contents of the box were valuable and requested him to take charge of it and in case of Hurd's death to dispose of what it contained as directed in the signed paper. The doctor placed the heavy box in his conveyance and with grave doubts as to the propriety of his action in the matter, carried it to his home.

The doctor continued his professional visits daily, but after a short illness, the strange old man passed away. No kindred or distant friends appeared at the funeral. In fact there was not sufficient time for them to have received the news of his death and to have come from their far-off homes over the winter roads. Not even his devoted Indian friend was present, which caused some comment until it became known that Uscung had died at his home near Esopus early in the winter, a fact which even Hurd did not appear to have known. The funeral, however, was at-

tended by many people. The families in the immediate neighborhood, by whom Hurd had been highly respected, were well represented, and quite a throng went out from Knotlimb. Whether actuated by deep thoughts about the precarious tenure of human life, the certainty of death, and by solemn questions in relation to the immortality of the soul, or by curiosity to see the interior of the old dwelling, the writer was not informed. A short but worthy sermon was spoken by a member of the Society of Friends and the body of the old hermit was laid at rest in one of the village graveyards.

CHAPTER IV

ON the day of the funeral, the doctor, who was thoroughly capable and trustworthy in business matters as well as in the discharge of his professional duties, requested several men, among the most reliable residents of the hamlet, to come to his house at a certain hour the following morning. When all of them had arrived, he explained to them why their attendance had been desired and brought forth the heavy wooden box, broke the wax seals, and unlocked and opened it in their presence. The contents were so astonishing to those assembled that while the doctor was busy arranging them on the centre table, not a word was uttered by any one. They all appeared to have been struck dumb with amazement, and for good reason. They

were hard-working, thrifty men who all their lives had been accustomed to economical living and the slow gains of small business interests. Now there before them was spread out a display of riches the like of which not one of them had ever seen save in the visions of dreamland. Had Aladdin appeared before them and wrought miracles with his wonderful lamp, they would not have been more astounded. There were a number of strong linen bags containing thousands of gold coins which gave forth almost musical sounds as they were successively poured out upon the large table; many flat irregular shaped pieces or cakes of solid gold of various sizes; thick packages of fresh-looking bank notes, most of which were of large denominations, and a leather sack filled with nuggets of fine heavy gold ore. When the excitement produced by this remarkable exhibit had in a measure subsided, the doctor asked all those present to assist him in counting the hoard, and made a written list with

full descriptions of the entire contents of the box. After the list was duly attested by the signatures of all the members of the party, the box was repacked, locked and sealed, and the doctor lost no time in depositing it in a secure place in a large village on the east side of the river. At an early day he notified all the persons who had a right to share in the estate, paid the few debts, including a fair amount for his own services, and in due time distributed the very valuable property among those entitled thereto.

The almost incredible news of the wealth of the old recluse was known to every one in Knotlimb within an hour after the prudent doctor had carried away the box containing it. Never since the capture of the Highland forts by the British, the burning of Esopus, and the surrender of Burgoyne and his army, had any event produced such a furore in the little community as was caused by this occurrence. Not only in the hamlet itself, but far out

over the countryside, it was before night-fall the all-engrossing topic of wondering conversation.

It had long been rumored that Hurd had been instrumental in saving the life of the old Indian during the troublous days of the Revolution, and that the latter had shown his gratitude to his rescuer by confiding to him the secret of the location of a gold mine in the River Hills, and assisted him in working it upon his periodical visits. It was also stated that the Indian had been for years the only survivor of those of his race who had known the exact situation of the mine. These and other rumors now assumed the form and character of real facts in the minds of the people in and around Knotlimb.

In one of the interesting stories that were soon in circulation and generally regarded as truthful, it appeared that the mine was the identical one from which the Indian tribe that occupied the west shore of the river in very early days, obtained the gold

that had excited the cupidity of Hendrick Hudson and the crew of the *Halfmoon* in 1609. Indeed in the pages of authoritative history recorded after the death of Truman Hurd, it is asserted that long before the discovery of the Shatemuc (the Indian name of the Hudson) by the Whites, the Indians knew of a gold mine supposed to have been situated in the Shawangunk Mountains. Its precise location, however, is said never to have been disclosed by them. In view of the facts and traditions connected with the subject, it was not surprising that many well-informed people came to believe that the now undoubted mine in the River Hills had been mistakenly asserted by historians to have been located in the Shawangunk Range. It seems proper that we should leave this attractive question for further attention at some future time.

"For many miles they stand like sentinels guarding the long-settled region that lies between them and the Hudson."

CHAPTER V

THE natural result of the remarkable things that had happened was that as soon as the snow and ice had disappeared many men of all ages, lads, boys, and even some of the most hardy and venturesome women of the hamlet and its vicinity, visited the Hills in search of the mine. Every part of the eastern slope of the portion of the range in question was subjected to what was deemed the most thorough scrutiny. The search was continued for months but without success. Most of those engaged in it finally ceased their efforts, but there was a gradually lessening number who persisted in the enticing quest. The substantial facts of the case rendered it in their view a legitimate and promising undertaking. Thoughts of

the old hermit's years of strange independent life among them; of his secret visits to the mountains with his Indian companion, and of the still more convincing evidence furnished by the wonderful treasure box, kept up their hope and courage. The appeal that these facts made to their imagination as well as to their practical judgment was irresistible.

Such was the state of the affair when two intelligent lads, aged about sixteen years, sons of neighboring farmers living near Knotlimb, and who attended the village school together, decided to try once more to find the mysterious mine. Although their several former attempts had been in vain, the coveted object which they felt was certainly located in the depths of one of the Hills had continued to be the subject of their daily and nightly dreams. They resolved to do their utmost in this effort and, if it failed, to abandon the search as nearly all others had already done.

Early one pleasant morning, in the out-

of-door season, the boys left their homes on foot as usual, for what they expected would be a very hard day's work. Their parents, who also were among those who still believed that the mine might yet be found, had fitted them out with supplies of food for the day, and each one carried a flint and steel and a tin candle lantern of the kind in general use at that time. These lanterns were round with cone-shaped tops, and were pierced by numberless small holes through which the light was emitted. They could not readily be broken, and were taken for use in case the boys found any caves or dark passages in the rocks which they might wish to explore.

The vigorous lads spent nearly all the long day clambering up and down the shady sides of that part of the mountains supposed to have been frequented by Hurd and the Indian. They climbed from base to summit and returned repeatedly in different places but without finding anything of a promising nature. Seen from a

distance these small mountains, like those of greater size, look smooth and soft as though covered with blue velvet, and without any pronounced inequalities. But all those who enlisted as searchers for the mine found the experience most strenuous. The steep rock-strewn sides were hard to mount or descend; some of the declivities were impossible for human feet to master, and no one ever spent an active day among them without becoming thoroughly worn and weary. Such was the condition of our lads late in the afternoon, when on their way down for the last time.

Just then a thunder cloud from which they had heard ominous rumblings when far away, suddenly swept over the heights above them, darkening the air and accompanied by a furious gale of wind. The boys were in a section of the range with which they were not acquainted and were doubtful what course to pursue. They looked about for some kind of refuge from the oncoming storm. They saw through

the trees a rocky ledge which appeared as though it might give them protection. Hastily going to it and following along its base, they soon came to a spot where a random lot of loose pieces of stone occupied a place overhung by a projecting shelf of rock. The dark space beneath the shelf, if cleared of the stones, promised to afford them a safe refuge from the rain and wind. By the time they had thrown out the heavy fragments, which required several minutes, the rush and roar of the shower was upon them. They were fortunate in finding such a good shelter, for the tempest was protracted and fearful. Torrents of rain, mingled with hailstones of unusual size, fell through the darkened air, all about them. A number of trees, unable to withstand the force of the wind, went crashing down within their sight. The almost continuous darts of lightning and terrific peals of thunder appalled them, accustomed as they were to similar but less shocking occurrences. They wished

most earnestly that they had remained at home and vowed in the depth of their hearts that, if once safely back, they would never again be so foolish as to think they could do what all others had failed to accomplish.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN the storm had passed, the lads were disturbed by the fact that night was approaching. They had kept their lanterns safe, the light of which would enable them to find their way down the rugged steep to the plain below. Turning toward the inner wall of the dark place to escape the wind, one of them lighted his lantern. The bright flash revealed an aperture in the rough rock. It seemed large enough to admit the passing through it of the body of a man, but it was so low down that it could only be entered by stooping and moving on hands and knees. When they first saw it, the boys were not inclined to regard it with any interest, and were about to leave the place on their way home. Acting upon a second and fortunate

thought, the one with the light lay down and thrust his lantern into the hole as far as he could reach. He was surprised to find that the opening grew larger and higher a little way from its mouth. After a short conference, they decided to enter it and ascertain whither it led. Crouching low, and retaining their lanterns with difficulty, they were soon in a hall-like passage, running downward at first and then nearly level. It was generally higher than their heads when standing erect and averaged more than a yard in width.

They had now forgotten all about their plan to leave the mountain and were much excited. Their trepidation was increased by the darkness, the stillness, and by the fear of some unknown danger. But they bravely kept on, feeling encouraged and thrilled by the hope that at last they might be on the point of making the great discovery. The passage was perfectly dry. It rose and descended, turned to the right and left, but its general

course appeared to be nearly straight ahead.

This entrance hall, for such it proved to be, after pursuing its tortuous course for several hundred yards, finally ended in a spacious round cavern about fifty feet in diameter. It was so lofty that the light from the lantern, even when the door was opened, failed to reveal to their straining eyes the full height of the dark space above them. With fast beating hearts they examined the place. On one side there was what is supposed to have been a primitive smelting plant with evidences of having seen long service. Upon it they found a large iron mortar and pestle, some crucibles, a small sledge-hammer, some steel drills, and several bottles containing liquids of different colors. On the floor were a box of charcoal, some small sticks of wood, pieces of old blankets, a rough wooden bench, and a few other articles. The welcome sound of falling water, not far away, reminded the boys of their intense thirst.

The gentle murmur came from what appeared to be another approach to the central cavern, similar to the one by which they had entered and directly across from it. They soon found the spring a little way along the passage. It was a tiny rivulet which sparkled in the lantern light as it gushed from an orifice in the face of the rock, ran down to and across the floor along a slight depression, and disappeared in a fissure on the opposite side. A drinking cup standing near was soon cleaned, and, holding it under one of the mimic falls, they refreshed themselves with long draughts of what seemed to them the best water they had ever tasted.

Returning to the cavern, the happy young fellows made a further search for precious metal and for signs indicating its presence. They found a recess off the central space about two yards wide and of considerable length, which presented indications of having been recently worked. The light revealed thick irregular veins of

metal running through the rock in several places, and small piles of refuse were scattered about the floor of the cavern, near at hand. There was quite a quantity of ore on the smelting platform which evidently had been taken from the recess. Under one of the piles they found a number of heavy yellow metal cakes which they decided, at once, must be solid gold. The size and appearance of the cavern indicated that gold might have been taken from it in small quantities, by simple methods, perhaps for many centuries.

They were now convinced that they were in the old hermit's long-sought mine, the source of all his wealth. Putting the cakes of gold in their pockets, they sat down on the bench at one side and talked over the situation. They were lonely and hungry, all their food having been consumed about midday. The last words that had been said to them on their departure were: "Be sure and come back before dark." They were eager to relate the story of their

exploit and they almost decided to leave for home immediately. But they were very weary and it was then long after nightfall. They would have to return to the entrance, find their way down the mountain side, and walk a long distance over the hilly road beyond. They were even uncertain whether they would be able to find the right road. Visions of wild beasts that might be prowling through the woods also entered their minds. They felt it would be too much for them to undertake and dangerous to make the attempt. They were confident their parents would forgive them when they knew all the facts. Besides they wished to examine the cavern and its long passages more carefully now that they had actually found them. So they concluded to remain until the next day and after a good rest go back by daylight.

Acting upon this wise conclusion they shook out the old blankets and placed them in a smooth spot on the rocky floor.

Then, wrapping up several sticks of firewood in successive layers of paper for pillows and without removing their clothes, they put out the light and lay down to what proved to be a long but by no means dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER VII

THE lads had no means of knowing what hour of the day or night it was when they awoke. For a few minutes they were in doubt where they were or what had befallen them. The total darkness and silence seemed ominous to their half-conscious senses. Presently they heard the faint reassuring sound of falling water in the distance, and the facts connected with their situation suddenly dawned upon them. They were wide awake at once. Notwithstanding their great hunger their hearts were full of joy and brightest hopes. They had solved the great problem; how rejoiced their parents would be; they would become rich and would enrich their dearest friends; all the people of Knotlimb would be astonished and some of them would be

jealous; their favorite girls would smile upon them more sweetly than ever before; it was a glorious adventure and their long-cherished ambition would be fully satisfied. Such were some of the reflections that passed through their young minds before they arose from their hard bed.

Their course was now plain before them. They would try to find more pieces of molten gold; examine with greater care the veins of metal in the rocks; take as many of the finest specimens of ore as they could carry in their pockets, and reach their homes as soon as possible. The candle in the lantern they had used was almost burned out. They knew that they would have to be careful of the remaining one, as the carrying out of their plans, and perhaps their own safety, depended upon it. Groping their way to the smelting platform where the lanterns had been left, one of them struck an igniting spark from his flint and succeeded in lighting the fresh candle in the lantern that held it.

Instantly as the gleam of light shone out, faintly illuminating the cavern, the lads were almost paralyzed by a savage growl coming from the passage by which they had entered the cave. Wheeling in that direction they saw two fearfully bright spots in the darkness beyond the opening. They could not see the form of an animal there, but they knew that the fiery eyes of some ferocious beast were glaring at them. The threatening growl was repeated and seemed to them to grow louder and nearer as though the brute was about to enter the cave. Regaining their self-possession, they were electrified by the conviction that they would have to fight for their lives. Their first concern was how they could do it to the best advantage. They had no weapons, save common pocket-knives, which would be of little service in a battle with so large a creature. Fortunately they thought of the heavy ore that lay on the platform, and the large and small fragments of refuse rock on the floor. They at once caught up

some of these and threw them with all their strength at the balls of fire. Flung by the muscular arms of the courageous lads, accustomed to hurling stones a great distance, they were exceedingly dangerous missiles. They went whizzing through the short intervening space, volley after volley, in quick succession. Some of them clashed against the rocky sides of the passage and went bounding on along it. But others made no returning sound. They had undoubtedly hit their mark, and going at such great velocity they could not fail to injure painfully any living thing which they struck.

While this furious onset lasted, which was probably less than a minute of actual time, the hitherto ghostly silence was broken constantly and the whole place filled by an intermingling of the most blood-curdling growls, yells, snarls, and screams. At one moment the boys thought the beast was about to charge upon them. One of them seized the sledge-hammer, and the other

the largest drill, and they stood ready for a desperate close-quarter resistance. The space between them and their enemy was not more than forty or fifty feet. A few of its great bounds would have brought it upon them. No one can tell with any certainty what the result would have been, had the attack been made. A fortunate vigorous blow from the hammer or drill, upon the head of the animal, might have either stunned or killed it outright. The chances however were against such good luck. One powerful sweep of the terribly armed claws of the enraged beast would have meant death, or the utter helplessness of its victim, and a single grasping bite of its long sharp teeth in the throat would have been fatal in a moment. But the expected onslaught was not made and the lads resumed their attack. Not for another instant did they stop their rapid fire. From the time the beast was first struck by the pieces of ore and throughout the seemingly long period that its awful, many-

toned voice was echoing through the cavern, its terrifying eyes had alternately appeared and disappeared, flashing from side to side of the black hole. Suddenly the horrid medley of sounds ceased and the piercing eyes vanished. The wounded animal had not dared to leave the passage and enter the cave, hence the boys had not caught even a momentary sight of it. They had seen only its fiendish eyes. The appalling reception it had received was evidently more than it could endure. The lads now paused in their assault, but stood ready, tense and resolute, for renewed action. A period of entire stillness ensued. This was soon succeeded by a long-drawn scream from far along the passage, followed by another and another, but growing fainter with each repetition. The lads had often listened to thrilling tales, narrated by old hunters, of encounters with carnivorous beasts, and now they realized that from the resemblance the prolonged screams bore to the human

voice their assailant was none other than the most dreaded of all the wild animals of the mountains, a terrible panther.

CHAPTER VIII

RECOVERING partially from their fright, but breathless and perspiring from their severe exertion, they quickly deliberated what they should now do. They assumed that the panther would not repeat his visit at once and perhaps might go away entirely. Nevertheless, they deemed it imprudent to attempt to return by the passage through which they had entered and of which the beast now held possession. Rather than take the risk of trying to go out that way, unless it was necessary for them to do so, they thought it best to explore the passage on the opposite side of the cave. When they visited the spring for water on their arrival in the cavern they had observed that it led on beyond into the darkness. Perhaps it

might afford them a safer exit. By this time, they were much relieved at the continued silence of the panther, but lost no time in attempting to carry out their newly made plans. Like many mature experienced men in eager pursuit of wealth in other fields of endeavor, who often find something almost as discouraging as a savage beast in the path of their business ventures, the boys were now more anxious to get out of the golden cave than they had been to discover and enter it. With trembling hands they filled their pockets with pieces of the heavy ore. They also carried away the sledge-hammer and drill to be used as weapons in case of need. Pausing a few moments at the spring they again drank of its pure, cold water and, guided by the light of their lantern, pushed on along the unknown way. It was similar to the other, but more crooked in its course and much more obstructed. They stopped often to listen for sounds from behind them and to see whether the dreaded eyes

were watching them. Their lantern light enabled them to make fairly good progress, although the way was often nearly blocked by fallen rocks and low places about and through which they were obliged almost to crawl. Encumbered with the articles they carried, they were a long time in going a distance which they thought afterward must have been quite half a mile. They were much worried by the possibility that the passage might come to an end inside the mountain. In that case, they showed the fine courage they possessed by resolving that they would return to the cavern and go out the way they came in, trusting to being able to drive the panther before them in case he had not gone already. It would be their only alternative, for to remain there would mean certain death from starvation. But the farther they progressed the more they felt encouraged to believe they would soon see daylight. They reasoned that this passage might have been an entrance to the mine from

the western slope of the mountain, and that its use may have been discontinued long ago in favor of the much shorter and less obstructed entrance to it on the eastern side.

Just then something happened that almost banished their remaining fears. They heard strange sounds over their heads in a part where the ceiling was unusually high. Turning their light upon the place they saw a colony of bats clinging to the rough rocks. They were unusually sensible lads for their age, and correctly surmised that the little brown-winged animals must have come in from a western entrance, else colonies of them would have been found before. They also saw clusters of what seemed to them glittering glass shining brightly in the lantern light. Evidently they had discovered some beautiful specimens of prismatic stalactites. Their first impulse was to obtain some of them to take home, but they were so tired that they thought it best to wait until they visited the mine again.

They were much encouraged by the sight of the bats and made good progress along the difficult course. They now felt, and strangely enough for the first time, a faint current of air coming from the direction they were going. This suggestive fact also increased their hopes of a speedy exit. They had gone but a short distance farther, when they saw, apparently not very far away, a small light spot which grew larger and brighter as they approached it. It proved to be the glorious light of day. It came through the crevices of a fragmentary mass of rock which almost filled the opening. For several yards it was so choked it was only by the most strenuous efforts that they cleared a way sufficiently large to enable them to pass through. Before doing so they were obliged to discard their lantern, sledge-hammer, and drill. When they finally emerged, they were, to their great delight, once more under the matchless blue of the summer sky, which never before had appeared to

them so beautiful. They saw by the position of the sun that it was in the early afternoon. They were well-nigh exhausted by excitement, hunger, and fatigue, and lying down in the first convenient place, they rested for a full half hour.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN the boys arose and looked about, they found themselves on the mountain side, which was covered thickly with masses of loose rocks of every size and form. They saw through the trees glimpses of a broad valley reaching across to higher mountains beyond. Here and there in the valley, which was much of it thickly wooded, appeared farm buildings, smooth meadows, and cultivated fields. A large stream occasionally seen in the openings, curving here and there along the heart of the lowlands, was an interesting feature in the lovely view. All was new and strange to the young adventurers, whose conjectures were correct that they had come entirely through one of the River Hills to the western side of the range.

They were extremely hungry and decided to go to the nearest farmhouse and ask for food. Threading their way down among the rocks and undergrowth of bushes to the open fields, they soon reached the place they had selected. The good woman who met them at the door was startled by their appearance, which was not surprising. In their haste to leave the cavern after their encounter with the panther, they had forgotten to take their caps, so they were bareheaded; their hair was badly mussed, their clothes soiled and torn, and their faces and hands begrimed with dirt. They were so weak that it was difficult for them to talk or to walk in their usual manner. Their pockets still bulged with pieces of ore and the cakes of gold. They had been handicapped badly by the bulk and weight of their precious spoil, but had brought it all out with them. They had talked about it and had resolved that they would not tell anyone of their experience or show the ore and gold pieces until their parents

A section of the countryside near the River Hills.

had seen them and had heard all about the wonderful things that had happened to them. When the farm wife and her comely young daughter, who was about their own age, became curious to know what they had been doing, they simply stated that they lived near Knotlimb and that they had been lost in the mountains, where they had passed the night.

While they were enjoying the ample supply of food which was placed before them, the farmer himself appeared. After hearing their story, he said that he was about to start for the river landing near Knotlimb, with his team and market wagon, and would take them home. Greatly pleased at the prospect of seeing their friends again after what seemed to them to have been weeks of absence, and strengthened by their simple but excellent repast, they set out with the kind farmer in high spirits.

The road ran for some distance along the valley, and, then turning through a gap

between two of the big green hills, came out on the eastern side of the chain to a region with which the boys were familiar. They were soon made aware that their absence had caused a great commotion throughout the countryside. Their fathers and many others had gone to the mountains to search for them. Their mothers, who had remained at home, were so happy to have them safely back that tears of joy filled their fond eyes as they clasped their dear sons to their hearts. They were scarcely recognizable, however, they were so changed in appearance from the clean and properly dressed lads who had gone forth so hopefully the morning of the preceding day.

At that period, there were bears, wolves, and an occasional panther in the River Hills and in the mountains beyond them. They very rarely attacked human beings in the daytime, but were considered dangerous at night. For that reason the two lads had been warned to come home

before dark, which they had promised to do. Their failure to return after having been absent for two days and a night, with the awful thunderstorm intervening, was sufficient reason to justify their friends in thinking they had met with some serious accident, or possibly had been killed by wild beasts.[1]

[1] Almost within the memory of aged people now living in the valley of the Wallkill, beyond the River Hills and near the central base of the Shawangunk Range, there were many wolves in those mountains and also in the River Hills. They often came down to the inhabited lowlands and were considered so dangerous that residents of that region rarely ventured from their homes after nightfall without carrying lighted lanterns with them. But, singular as it appears, after the construction of the Delaware and Hudson Canal, the troublesome marauders were missing from their old haunts. Their nightly howls no longer disturbed the peace and quiet of the residents of the valleys. For untold ages they had infested that entire locality, swimming back and forth across the deep streams in their nocturnal forays and committing various depredations. They now abandoned their inherited lairs and territory and retreated to the fastnesses of the remote Catskills where they were safe from the intrusion of artificial waterways, which they must have regarded

The news of their return had preceded them, and when they arrived at their homes a number of friends, in addition to their own families, were there to greet them. Many others soon came, and joyful parties started for the mountains to tell the searchers the glad tidings. Signal guns were fired and horns blown along the base of the Hills, and by nightfall all who had gone to seek for the boys had returned. To the throng that came to see them and hear their story, they related the same

---

with instinctive suspicion and dread. Panthers and bears remained for years afterward, but finally, as the white settlers increased in numbers, they also followed the wolves to the safer seclusion of the greater mountains.

No thought seems to have been given to the old abodes of these formidable beasts. In the mountain ranges we have described, there are numerous caves and sheltered rock places which were undoubtedly their homes for untold centuries. Why would not a volume relating to them and illustrated with photographic pictures of many of their old dens be interesting? To the true lover of Nature the suggested quest would appear to offer a new and attractive field.

tale they had told the farmer's family. Not until they were alone with their parents did the shrewd lads disclose the whole truth about what had befallen them. With doors fastened and windows darkened, the young heroes, who had changed their clothes immediately upon their arrival, related their adventures. As proof of their almost incredible tale, they exhibited the pieces of gold and yellow-streaked nuggets of ore. The old people were astonished and pleased beyond measure by what they heard and saw. Proud of the courage and tact of their sons, they were fully convinced that the boys had indeed found the fabulous mine. At once the question arose as to what they should do about it. After carefully discussing the situation, they concluded to keep the discovery secret and as soon as the lads were rested they and their fathers would go to the mountains and examine the cave. They would then be able to make plans as to working the mine.

CHAPTER X

BEFORE the appointed time for the proposed trip an earthquake visited the Hudson River region. It was felt for more than a hundred miles around Knotlimb. It was the most severe disturbance of the kind that could be remembered by the oldest residents, and was talked about by the people and alluded to in the newspapers of the period long afterward. Very few buildings were destroyed and no great damage was done, but all the inhabitants of the area affected had their stories to tell of their experiences during the few minutes the frightful occurrence lasted. They said the ground rose and fell perceptibly; buildings were shaken, and a low, muffled, terrifying rumble filled the air. Dogs howled and other animals showed

"The setting sun is last seen as it sinks beyond them at the close of day." *Page 3.*

their natural fear in various ways, windows clashed as though a strong wind were beating against them, and dishes rattled on their closet shelves. A number of times similar shocks have happened in the river valley, both before and since the event to which we refer, and space would not now be taken for a description of this particular manifestation were it not for the fact, as we shall presently see, that it played a most important part in the history of the gold mine.

Soon after the day of the earthquake, the boys and their fathers started on their trip to the mountains. They were well prepared for the expedition, with horse and wagon and plenty of food. The two men each carried a musket, powder-horn, and bullet-pouch. The large house dog of one of the families accompanied them to scent the panther or other wild beasts that might be lurking near them.

Arriving at the foot of one of the River Hills which was indicated by the boys as

the one which probably contained the mine, they tied their horse in a shady spot, concealed from view, and taking their fire-arms clambered up the rocky height. After a long search they came to a point which the lads thought might be the place where they had found the entrance to the mine. But if it was the spot, its surroundings were so changed that they were quite doubtful about it. At the time of the great thundershower, they had been in such haste to find shelter that they had given but slight heed to the features of the locality, and so had little information upon which to base an opinion as to whether it was the identical location. A number of newly fallen trees were lying near by, but so they were all along the mountain side wherever the fearful wind had blown. If it was the place they sought, the ledge of rock appeared very different from what it had been. Lying all about were hundreds of tons of rock fragments strewn and piled up in great disorder. There were no traces

of the shelving rock and entrance crevice. A beetling cliff evidently had toppled over and effaced any especial resemblance the spot might have borne to the one sought. Realizing it was useless to endeavor to locate the entrance to the cavern, and ascribing the changed conditions to the action of the earthquake, the little party returned to the foot of the mountain much dispirited.

Upon looking around for water, they found a little stream from which they and their horse appeased their thirst. While eating the lunch they had brought, they decided to drive around the mountain and seek the western entrance to the cave. It was quite a long trip, but in due time they arrived at the farmhouse where the boys had met with such good treatment. The farmer and his family were curious to know the object of the visit, but, giving plausible, evasive answers to the questions asked, they proceeded on foot to the westerly slope of the mountain. Again

they were depressed by the very apparent fact that the earthquake shocks had changed the aspect of that locality almost as much as it had altered the opposite and more precipitous side. The lads were all at sea as to their knowledge of the precise place where they had emerged from the long passage. It might have been anywhere within a radius of a quarter of a mile or more. The party separated and went singly over the entire locality with keen scrutiny, covering every square yard, but all to no purpose. Not a sign of the exit from the cave could they find. It was evident that it also had been shaken and covered with quantities of newly fallen rocks. Only at the approach of night did they abandon the search. Weary and disheartened they returned home, feeling that the precious mine, upon which they had built so many bright castles of hope, was irretrievably lost.

Owing to this conviction on their part, it is probable that they failed to keep the

matter secret, and the facts soon became known to the public. The first impulse of the people was to regard it as a story made up by the boys, but when they were shown the pieces of ore and nuggets of gold, they were convinced of the truthfulness of the tale, for the men among them who had seen the old hermit's treasure box opened, declared that it contained the same kind of ore and cakes of gold. No one could doubt any longer that the mine really had been found.

Again the search commenced and was prosecuted by even more persons than had been engaged in it previously. Again discouragement attended all the efforts made. Gradually, in the course of years the subject became neglected and was only thought of as a useless time-consuming affair. The young discoverers, however, never ceased to regret the irony of fate that had deprived them of the prize they so richly merited.

The passage of time found them grown

to manhood. They were fine young men who had the esteem and best wishes of all who knew them. One of them had married the sister of his companion in their famous exploit of finding the ancient mine. The other had always remembered with interest and pleasure the daughter of the farmer beyond the mountains. In after years, he had often found his way to her distant home and he became a favored guest at the family fireside. In due time, he brought her to Knotlimb as his bride, where she was received by its best people as a welcome addition to the young society of the hamlet.

It was at this period that many eastern families became interested in the glowing accounts in circulation in relation to the rich farming region of the far west, which was then the central portion of New York State (!), and emigrated thither. They believed that the change would bring them easier and more abundant prosperity than they could achieve among their

native hills. Our two young men and their wives were among those who yielded to the alluring prospect. They settled on lands near the beautiful Owasco and Skaneateles lakes, where they spent useful lives and where it is said their descendants may still be found.

CHAPTER XI

MANY years rolled away and the particulars of the mine excitement were remembered only by a few elderly people, and finally they also followed old Truman Hurd to the graveyard. Death and change, from which no community escapes, have been busy in and around Knotlimb. It is nearly a century and a quarter since the two boys went hopefully forth from their homes on the mission which proved to be so hazardous and successful. The brave lads, the prowling panther, the farmer and his family, and every person connected with this little story,—aye, every living creature that then walked the earth has passed away. Even the names of most of those mentioned in these pages have been forgotten, and the location of the

place where the old hermit lived and the exact spot where his house stood are open to doubt and discussion.

Whether the great central cavern with its rich veins of yellow ore, the dark rock passages leading to it, and the little spring rivulet that murmured so musically in the silent gloom about it are still unchanged, is probably known only to some one of the clear cold streamlets that tinkle down the mountain side, and even that alas! cannot tell the secret in language that we can understand.

How strange is the order of Nature! Man, the work of whose mind and hand lasts for centuries, but whose earthly form perishes speedily and utterly, is forgotten, while the inanimate hills, among which he passes his short life and which are subservient to him while here, remain unchanged for ever and ever. So it is that while all the living creatures who inhabited that fair region during the years of which we have written are long since dead and gone,

the beautiful River Hills lift their round-topped summits into the sky and roll away in grand succession in the distance, the same as they did thousands of years ago, all unconscious that somewhere within the heart of one of their number still exists the long-lost Gold Mine of the Hudson.

THE LOST GOLD MINE OF THE HUDSON

THE principal scenes of this little story are laid in old "Knotlimb," one of the ancient river villages of Ulster County, N Y., and in the inland valleys and mountains of that picturesque region. (The real name of the village is included in the fictitious one.)

The River Hills run from near Highland southerly to beyond Milton and Marlborough. The finest view of the range may be seen from and near the State Road one and a half miles north of Highland Village. One of the highest points is plainly seen from Main St., Poughkeepsie.

The photographs of scenery near Highland and Marlborough were taken by Mrs. Tristram Coffin.

The color-plate scene on the cover represents the beautiful Lattingtown Valley west of Marlborough and Milton.

The frontispiece is from a special painting by Mr. William J. Wilson, artist.

During the last seven seasons this little volume has been sold at the book and newsstands of all the steamers of the Hudson River Day Line.

Extracts from some of the Letters of Appreciative Readers

John Burroughs: "I read the Lost Gold Mine Story one night sitting here by the open fire in my study, and really enjoyed it. It has an old fashioned charm and air of romance and adventure. Some way it suggested Cooper. You have told the story extremely well. The aroma of it still lingers in my mind."

Ex-President and Mrs. Roosevelt: "Thank you so much for the delightful book," etc.

Hon. Chauncey M. Depew: "I have just finished reading the book you sent me about the Gold Mine of the

Hudson. It is a very interesting contribution to the traditions of our noble river."

Right Rev. Joseph H. Johnson, Episcopal Bishop of Southern California. Fifty years ago he was the Rector of churches at Highland, Milton and Clintondale. "I have read your very charming Gold Mine story. I could not lay the book down until I had finished it and I am crying for more. I feel like going back to the old home and begging for your companionship in a tramp over the Ulster mountains. I greatly regret that when I lived near dear old Knotlimb on the Hudson, I did not unearth some of the traditions of that great sweet country as you have done."

Rev. Wm. Bancroft Hill, former Professor in Vassar College: "I have read the 'Lost Gold Mine of the Hudson' with real enjoyment. I yielded myself to the charm of the story with child-like acceptance of its details. Possibly it was the subject; let us believe, however, that it was the treatment; but I certainly found a flavor of Irving's Sketch Book as I read. I do not know whether this is your first venture in authorship. If it is, I envy you the thrill of modest pride upon beholding the child of your fancy in its very attractive dress."

Miss Lucy N. Salmon, Professor of History in Vassar College: "It has given me great pleasure to receive and read the Lost Gold Mine story. Your children, I am sure, could not have enjoyed it more at twilight than I have done on a bright Indian summer day in late November. Your friends and readers will all hope that you will write and print other stories, so successfully has this one been told."

Edna Dean Proctor: "I received and read your beautiful book 'The Lost Gold Mine of the Hudson,' with liveliest interest. Whether it be fact or tradition, it is a charming story."

Mary Hallock Foote, Grass Valley, Cal., a native of "Knotlimb." "Your attractive little book reached me duly and I have enjoyed its descriptions very much. The term 'River Hills' is new to me but it very fitly and musically describes that river chain of hills above the Highlands. Pray accept my felicitations."

Hon. Edmund Platt, former editor of the "Poughkeepsie Eagle," member of Congress and now member of the U. S. Reserve Board: "Last evening I read the 'Lost Gold Mine' and found it a delightful little story. I felt a strong desire to explore the River Hills again in the neighborhood of the village, which I visualize as Knotlimb, to see if I couldn't find that gold mine myself. The story is a decided addition to the literature of the Hudson River."

Mr. Andrew Purdy, of New York: "Your Gold Mine narrative is a production that is indeed worth while; a remarkable story of intense and lively interest."

Hon. F. C. Valentine of Los Angeles, Chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern California: "We enjoyed the 'Lost Gold Mine' very much. You described the boys' adventures in the mine and with the panther wonderfully well. The story is worthy of a place among the legends of the Hudson."

Mrs. Isabel Morgan Taylor of Poughkeepsie: "Your book is so highly spoken of. I am glad that you have used the talent which I knew you possessed. The style is clear and vivid and one's attention is held throughout."

Hon. Walter C. Anthony of Newburgh: "I became almost a boy again as I read it. There is such an air of reality about it that I could not help feeling that I knew just about where that gold mine must be."

Hon. Charles F. Brown of Newburgh and New York City, Ex-Justice of the Supreme Court: "I have received your delightful little book. You have told the story in a most charming way. I have given it to my two young granddaughters," etc.

Miss Belle Da Costa Greene, librarian of J. P. Morgan's private library: "Very many thanks for the copy of the 'Lost Gold Mine of the Hudson' which you so kindly sent to me. I have read it with the greatest pleasure and interest, and have since lent it to some of my friends. I remember your visit to the library very well and hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you here again."

Dr. Arthur L. Cutler, founder and for very many years owner and principal of the famous Cutler School, from which President Roosevelt was one of the first graduates: "Let me thank you very warmly for the 'Lost Gold

B45833

Mine of the Hudson.' It is a gem. I am glad that I do not know where the facts and romance begin, for all true literature is an intermingling of the two, and this is indeed a choice bit of literature—graceful in expression and suggesting more of the country of the Hudson than it tells."

From an **Editorial in the Highland (Ulster County) Post:**

"The author pays due recognition to our beloved 'River Hills' in the introductory pages. The way in which the story unfolds, grips and holds the interest of the reader, keeps him intent and in a pleasureable state of mind. The language is of that eminently satisfying quality that neither wastes time in tiresome verbiage nor sacrifices the artistic to brevity. The climax of the tale is all that one might wish, in that it closes with no improbable explanation as to why the mine remains 'Lost.' It is for the reason that somewhere in our immediate surroundings, the 'Lost Gold Mine of the Hudson' was locked up by Nature's key, that for all of us who know and love these rugged old hills, there is almost a mystic quality of interest in this absorbing little book. In appearance it is most dainty and attractive, and one opens its covers and devours its contents but to enjoy to the full the charm of its romantic flavor."

CENTRAL CIRCULATION,
CHILDREN'S ROOM